

Kyodan

News Letter

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN JAPAN
CHRISTIAN CENTER
5-1, 4 CHOME, GINZA, CHUO KU, TOKYO, JAPAN
Cable Address : Japankyodan Tokyo Telephone 561:6131

No. 39

December 20, 1969

KYODAN EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY

An extraordinary session of the Kyodan General Assembly was convened at Tokyo Yamate Church on **November** 25-26, 1969, upon the request by more than half the members of the Kyodan Standing Committee, for the purpose of the reconsidering the church's support of the Expo 70 Christian Pavilion, a vigorous opposition campaign having been waged for some months by groups of seminary students, young pastors and laymen in the Kansai and Kanto areas.

On the agenda were three major bills: Bill No. 3 to reconsider the church's stand on the Christian Pavilion as affirmed in Bill 55 at the 15th General Assembly; Bill No. 4 to re-affirm Bill 55 with the proviso that individual kyoku,* churches, pastors and laymen be free to support or refuse to cooperate with the Pavilion project according to their own convictions; and Bill No. 5 to affirm opposition to the Christian Pavilion on the grounds that Expo 70, as a crass display of the power and splendour of capitalism and the state, in league with each other, as a diversionary tactic from the political issues of 1970, and as a source of oppression and harm to the public, is not a fit organization through which to carry out an evangelistic project, and that an ecumenical evangelistic project is not valid without a basic unity in faith and mission.

An appeal was also drafted, addressed to the Prime Minister, protesting the proposed retention of military bases in Okinawa after reversion, and urging strongly the return of a nuclear-free Okinawa on terms that consider the desires of the Okinawan people.

During the opening worship service confusion rose when a group of over 70 seminary students, young pastors and laymen invaded the main floor, which had been reserved for official assembly members, and advancing up the aisles demanded the right to speak. The worship was continued, and at the conclusion Moderator Ii declared that the Assembly was officially in session with a duly constituted quorum. He then proceeded to give a Summary Statement outlining the events and trends in the Kyodan during the past year, stressing in particular the change in his own outlook that had been effected through the mass confrontation session of the student and young pastor group and the Kyodan Standing Executive Committee on September 1-2, and calling on the Assembly to re-examine both the issues of the Christian Pavilion and the present conduct of the Kyodan assembly system.

Recording Secretary Kuwabara of Osaka Kyoku then presented a statement challenging the right of 15 assembly members from Osaka Kyoku to represent the Kyoku on the grounds that they had participated in a boycott of the Kyoku Assembly the previous Friday, December 21, carried out by 101 members, forcing cancellation of the assembly for lack of a quorum.

In the argument which ensued over the problem of seating the Osaka Kyoku members, it became impossible to conduct the Assembly in accordance with assembly rules of procedure, and Vice-Moderator Takasaki who was in the chair announced at 11/00 a.m. that the assembly would continue, not as a duly constituted session, but as a debate forum. Most of the balance of the day was occupied in a heated debate, chaired by the moderator, but often controlled vocally and even physically by the anti-Expo group who expressed its views and feelings with jeers, cheers and seizing of the microphone. Through it all, however, the arguments for and against the Christian Pavilion were presented by representative speakers.

*kyoku - synod or district

On the morning of the second day, seminary students of the anti-Expo faction took control of the microphone, with Toshihiko Kobayashi of Doshisha Seminary assuming the position of de facto chairman, and raised certain questions, notably the absence of Prof. Kazo Kitamori who is a member of the Standing Executive Committee, the chairman of the Faith and Order Committee, a member of the Christian Pavilion Central Committee and chairman of the Theme Committee. Principal Katsumi Matsumura, of Kansei Gakuin Theological Department, was cross questioned on the matter of the faculty's withdrawing of its recommendation for a certain student to the Kyodan's Committee on Ministerial Training and Qualifications and on his stand with respect to World War II. Prof. Kumazawa of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary and Mr. Tamotsu Hasegawa were also questioned on their stand supporting the Christian Pavilion.

On the 26th, as the scheduled adjournment time of 5.30 approached, the moderator resumed chairmanship of the meeting, presented a summary statement in which he re-affirmed his opposition to the Christian Pavilion and called on the members to re-examine their positions in the light of the discussions that had been held and to continue the discussions at Kyoku and church level.

He requested and received an approval by applause for the declaration on Okinawa, which was to be presented to the Prime Minister as an appeal, but did not constitute an official Kyodan bill. The Assembly was then adjourned at 6.05 p.m. following the closing prayer offered by Rev. Shunsaku Yoda, and the members left with a sense of bewilderment how to evaluate the two day session, and deeply mixed feelings over the validity of the anti-Expo stand, the tactics that had been used in presenting it, the permissiveness of disorder by the Moderator, and his adjournment of the Assembly without giving the members an opportunity to vote on the bills before the house.

SPECIAL KYODAN STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING

A special meeting of the Kyodan Standing Committee was convened by the moderator on Monday, December 8th at the Protestant Christian Center in response to a request by five members of the committee. Following the opening worship, Committee Member Tamotsu Hasegawa introduced a motion of censure of the Moderator for his manner of conducting the General Assembly and a demand for his resignation.

Mr. Ii, replying that he had received requests by letter both to resign and to continue as moderator, stated that he would not resign unless the motion was officially passed by the Committee.

Since Chairman Sadaaki Ogawa and Rev. Keisuke Soma of the Committee on Ministerial Training and Qualification were present to make a report, this report was received before lunch recess.

Following lunch two pastors, Seinosuke Oshio and Shigeru Yoshimatsu and layman Ryoza Otaka presented two requests to be recognized as non-voting members of the Standing Committee, and two of these, Oshio and Otaka were accepted after discussion by an ad hoc committee of five. Meanwhile a number of pastors and seminary students gathered and attended the meeting as observers, one of them demanding to be recognized as a non-voting member.

On the initiative of the non-voting members, Prof. Kitamori was cross-questioned on the reasons for his absence from the General Assembly, and the evaluation of the Assembly and Moderator Ii's chairmanship was tabled, with the decision being made to convene a Standing Executive meeting in the near future.

A summary interpretation of the General Assembly was agreed upon to the effect that it had been duly convened and was declared in session at 11.00, and remained officially in session until the interpellation that followed the Moderator's Summary Statement, at which time it changed to a debate forum which continued until the adjournment at 6.05 of the 26th. The closing summary statement was to be taken as expressing the personal views of the Moderator, and the Assembly members, not having had a chance to vote approval, could not be held responsible for their contents.

EXCERPTS FROM COMMENTS OF DELEGATES TO THE 16TH EXTRAORDINARY ASSEMBLY

of the United Church of Christ in Japan, taken from The Kyodan Times #3583 (Dec. #3583 (Dec. 13, 1969) and #3584 (Dec. 20, 1969)

Shinji Iwamura, pastor, Tokyo: Following the desires of the Anti-Expo Group, Moderator II finally called the Extraordinary General Assembly and tried hard to bring it to an end on schedule, but, actually, the Assembly was not formally opened the delegates who attended were not able to take a vote based on calm reflection, the Kyodan assembly system is now in grave danger and this is truly a great responsibility. Even if you say it was essential debate, the Kyodan's morals were completely violated for the leadership was absconded and enforced by a small number of students who placed their opponents under extreme pressure by shouting and jeering, a method quite the same as violence. Henceforth, if that kind of an Assembly is to be continued, delegates will not come, the Kyodan's highest policy organ will be destroyed and perhaps bring about the worst possible situation, the breakup of the Kyodan.

Akihiko Suzuki, layman, Tokai District: (1) I think that the 16th Assembly was never really convened. The agenda was unilaterally ignored, not one of the bills was considered before the meeting was abruptly ended. This was an act of betrayal against the delegates who had come to participate in the Assembly and is truly deplorable. Neither the debate session which, from start to finish, was carried on by a part of the Anti-Expo Group and was primarily a one-sided accusation meeting, nor the Moderator's Summary should be thought to be binding on the delegates or the churches.

(2) The action of Moderator II, in abandoning the duty and responsibility of the office of Moderator, cannot be approved. The Executive Committee should immediately clarify its position concerning responsibility for the confusion and adjournment of the Assembly.

(3) We should make the most of this experience to restudy what the Kyodan should be, especially with reference to the character and management of the assembly system.

Mrs. Yoshiko Isshiki, laywoman, Tokyo: For two unprecedented days, the Kyodan assembly was immersed completely in the battle of pro and con concerning the Expo problem. As a result, my own personal understanding of the problem was deepened. However, I thought, "Isn't prosecuting and accusing an opponent in this way the same as judging the person?" I was repulsed by this. Although the opinions were quite divergent, there were on both sides of the argument those whose attitude is that "one must commit himself to the concern for re-establishment of human values," and in this I feel we are shown a new way.

Teruo Kanai, pastor, Hokkaido: I attended the Assembly expecting it to be convened, but the prospects were not bright. The method of discussion was hardly the best, but the very problems we must grapple with and be involved in were those presented at the Assembly. Although opposing the Expo is alright, one matter of concern was that of jumping from a defense of the Constitution line to push to the fore the class struggle theory. Those of the Anti-Expo Group who follow this line are few, but I think this point will be one for wide dispute as we enter the 1970 era. Anyway, how we Christians are to witness in this world is being searchingly and profoundly questioned.

COMMENTS FROM MISSIONARIES

(Excerpts from statements compiled and circulated by the Interboard Office)

M. A. Tunbridge: What can one call the meeting? Certainly not a General Assembly of the church. Not even a "discussion meeting," which the moderator declared it to be from the afternoon session of the first day. There was no discussion. There was only a one-sided presentation of anti-Expo views, accusations against some people, and cross-examination of others.

I have sympathy for the impatience of the young people with the conservatism of their elders. Undoubtedly the older people have often refused to listen and have been slow to change. The young people want a voice in the affairs of the church as in other places, and they should have it. But when they assume that their opinions are the only ones that can truthfully be held, and ruthlessly suppress all who hold other opinions, then they destroy the freedom and democracy they say they are upholding. Had there been a more orderly presentation of views from both sides, I think it is possible that the majority of those present might have come to agree with the students, but their tactics had the effect of hardening the views of those who held the opposite position and of turning from them some who were not sure of their own views and had gone to the meeting prepared to listen and come to a decision.....

R. Fukada: The gathering at the Yamate Church was indeed an historic event for the Kyodan. Not all historic events are pleasant and this was certainly not a pleasant event. What the young people did was an act of indictment, not only of the established structure and the bureaucracy of the Kyodan, but of all of us, including themselves, in taking the Gospel too lightly, quite unknowingly. As a matter of fact, what was most severely pointed out in the two-day session was what the boys called the "crime" of innocent but ignorant good will and good intentions.

What we must do now is to transcend the ugliness and poor communication the boys resorted to and face up to the issues they pointed out. We must be humble in seeing ourselves under God's judgment, not under the loud voices and ugliness of the boys. Only then can we honestly say that God works in everything for good, and that it was an historic event which we must turn into something good and creative.

We must admit that the boys should be given credit for not giving up on the Church. Why should they bother with it when in so many ways the Church is not meeting them head on? We should rejoice in thinking that the Gospel still means something to them and that the Church still has a place in their lives.

G. Laman: Perhaps the days of paper plans, simplistic solutions, motto theology, backroom manipulation, irresponsible formalism, and spineless conformity are numbered. There may be hope for our Japanese church in the totality of commitment of some of these youth so what they believe to be right, in the fact that so many are becoming concerned about the integrity and the long-range, deeper meanings of the church's life, and the refusal of many to be held any longer by the web of social relationships that have controlled most Japanese for so long. There was a great deal to be learned from those who demanded this rethinking of the Kyodan decision to support the Christian Pavilion at Expo 70, and the serious implications of the issue for the future of the churches in Japan has been made clear.

But it must also be said that the angry shouting, finger-pointing, accusing, intolerant, explosive young people, who for all practical purposes controlled the two-day assembly, appear to be radical and ideologically totalitarian to the point that they may be fully as much a threat to the existence of the church in Japan and/or fulfilling of its mission as what they oppose. Absolute refusal to allow the other side of the issues to be presented fairly, use of communist-style forced confessions, threats, violence (physical and verbal), and other inhuman treatment of anyone who disagrees with them would seem to indicate that the spirit of mutual respect and love among brothers in Christ, the spirit of humility that recognizes that we are all wrong sometimes, and the spirit of mutual forgiveness essential to

the life of the church are seriously lacking among them. Despite the truth and validity of much of what these brethren are telling us, the alternative they offer us as a church is a different set of sins and imbalances. What they do speaks so loudly it's difficult to hear what they are saying.

If the Kyodan is to become a church that is faithful to its mission and has integrity, there must be an acceptance of, openness to, and willingness to learn from each other and a recognition of the working of God's spirit in others on the part of all of us individuals and parties concerned.

A. Kamitsuka: Setting aside comments on the tactics used by the "young" for the moment and also the "controversial" behaviour of our moderator, this observer was heartened to find in this first experience at an assembly deep concern about "our Kyodan" and the impatience toward the "lukewarmness" and "irresponsibility" of the Kyodan to some vital issues. What seemed even more significant, however, was to witness these concerns being expressed by the younger members and they are the products of the Kyodan's post-war church-school education.....

Now for some specific impressions, Moderator Ii seemed to lose control of the assembly to the invading "young" shortly after it was convened on the first day..... The happenings of the two days of the assembly seemed to this observer, however, to be the outward manifestation of an inward struggle for humanization which began with the coming of Christ. Here the voice of the "young" sought recognition and the moderator recognized it. Unfortunately there has not evolved in the post-war structure or fellowship of the Kyodan the processes and procedures which can lead to meaningful and creative dialogue. No educational program exists that provides training for the members of the Kyodan to nurture communal life. It is regrettable that this real need had to be demonstrated in this way.

There will undoubtedly be many who will be hard on our moderator for his mishandling or his failure to lead the delegates of the assembly. Some explanation will be expected from him. It seems though that in the end something was accomplished that perhaps had not happened before. In the confrontation there was a dialogical breakthrough. While the manner and means of the "young" were obnoxious much of what they said was worth pondering. As one observer put it, instead of stalling or stifling this minority voice, Moderator Ii set aside the structure of the Kyodan momentarily--accepting personal responsibility as the only recourse at this particular juncture-- in order to let the young witness to their immediate and legitimate concerns. This move gave the "young" an opportunity to participate in the assembly without jeopardizing the present structure of the Kyodan.

R. B. Norton: That we were all forced to hear what the angry ones had to say didn't so bother me, rather it was good for all of us. For several months I have felt that what the students were trying to say was for the most part good and needed saying. But, when there were a few (not too many to be sure) elected delegates, one a woman, who tried to get the floor and were forced back into their seats, not simply by the howl of the students, but by more obvious pressures, I must confess that I winced a little and found myself sliding down a little further into my seat. In a word, let it be clearly stated that there was nothing "free" about the discussion I saw on the second day. It was then that I realized that the discussion on the previous evening-- one for and one against Expo 70--was permitted as a sop tossed to the Assembly. Any attempt to pass off what was done on that second day as "free discussion" is an insult to the intelligence of the elected delegates.

Now let me say a word about the "assembly system" now on trial. I think we all recognize that no one system is perfect and that any system must have built into it ways whereby it can be up-dated with the times. The time to up-date the Kyodan system has come. That we have always tried to do too much in too short a time at the national level, thus barring full discussion, is obvious to all. That our way of choosing delegates needs review goes without comment. But I would like to reflect particularly on the role of the moderator in the "assembly system." This is the first time in my twenty-five year's experience that the moderator has opened

the meeting by declaring his won personal opinion on the business yet ahead, and then closed the meeting by calling the delegates to a specific course of action, namely his own, when the delegates were never given the opportunity to vote on any issue. In the climate of such a meeting his call to subject the issue at hand to full and thorough study was ludicrous. If what we were subjected to for those two days is an alternative way of handling church business, then I, for one, will keep my faith in the possibilities which the assembly system holds as still the best way for the church which wants to be truly democratic. I believe a careful study of our Kyodan system will show that it can be amended so that a rising generation can be heard, and can participate legitimately in the decision making process, but without dominating the church.

L. N. Grier: We are already in 1970, just as the church anticipated the nation in the return of Okinawa to the Kyodan, so 1970 has come to the church in 1969. By the term "1970," I mean the escalation from dialogue to confrontation. A whole new set of dynamics comes into operation when we escalate to the level of confrontation. Few of the old rules apply. The easiest temptation is to analyse the phenomenon of confrontation with the concepts and values of dialogue. The result is to abhor confrontation and to wish for a restoration of order and a return to normalcy. But once we have escalated, that desire is only sentimental.

The essence of confrontation is choosing sides. Confrontation has the effect of elevating the political dimension. This includes ecclesiastical politics and has the effect of exposing the concealed politics of the parliamentary process. It is impossible to participate in confrontation without taking sides. This is very painful. Missionaries, being nice clean people, prefer not to get involved in taking sides. We prefer to remain on some Olympian summit and play the Grand Reconciler. But once the situation has escalated to confrontation, it becomes impossible to be relevant outside the confrontation. Worse yet, our silence lends a tacit approval of our cooperation with the politics of the power block within the parliamentary process.....

The Medium is the Message. I am no student of McLuhan, but I understand one of his theses is that each time the medium of communication is escalated to a higher dimension, the message itself undergoes a metamorphosis. In other words, the medium of communication itself says something. The fact that the old power structure functioned through a parliamentary process should have been saying something to us (about feudalism!) And the fact that missionaries are allied 100% with the process should have been saying something about partners in mission, missionary security pacts, etc.

The escalation to confrontation, the presence of helmeted students, the late hours of adjournment, blocked exits (also interpreted as an invitation to stay for the best part), the lack of respect for seniors, the harsh interrogation (also interpreted as an insistent prodding after truth)--all these things become part of the new message.

I would judge that the majority of the establishment is not getting the message. The failure to get the message is registered in countless ways, of which backlash is the most obvious. The failure of the message to get through only encourages the opposition to escalate their medium. In that sense, the blame for escalation is equally the fault of those who fail to provide the required feedback. How does one register that the message is getting through? I would say that Moderator Ii's report is a perfect demonstration that the message is getting through.

Some Concluding Guidelines: These are our students from our churches who have listened to our sermons and taken them more seriously than we supposed or intended. They constitute our future.

The way out is the way ahead, not the way back. To want to return to normal is the want to go back. We can effect this only by police power.

The way ahead is to recognize that disruption is part of the renewal of the church. It has never been otherwise. These are necessary birthpangs. But who would say he greets this part with rejoicing.

The suspicion of collusion among opposition forces is almost wholly imagined. This is not a conspiracy. It is spontaneous.....

One will keep my faith in the possibilities which the assembly has opened. I believe still the best way for the church which wants to be truly democratic is a careful study of our Kyodan system will show that it can be amended so that a rising generation can be heard, and can participate legitimately in the decision making process, but without dominating the church.

YAMAHATA'S RETURN ON FURLOUGH

Rev. and Mrs. Katsumi Yamahata and two of their three children arrived at Haneda on December 9th, returning from Bolivia on furlough after completing their second 5-year term serving the Bolivian Methodist Church under the joint sponsorship of the Kyodan, United Methodist Church and Swiss Methodist Church.

At this Christmas season, the editors and staff of the Kyodan News Letter extend to you all their sincere greetings, with the hope that the New Year holds for you much joy and creative living.

The November issue was held over pending the General Assembly, and now is combined with the December issue to bring you both news and critical comments on the Assembly.

The Medium is the Message. I am no student of McLuhan, but I understand one of his theses is that each time the medium of communication is escalated to a higher dimension, the message itself undergoes a metamorphosis. In other words, the medium of communication itself says something. The fact that the old power structure functioned through a parliamentary process should have been saying something to us (about feudalism). And the fact that missionaries are allied 100% with the process should have been saying something about partners in mission, missionary security, etc.

The escalation to confrontation, the presence of helmeted students, the late hours of adjournment, blocked exits (also interpreted as an invitation to stay for the past part), the lack of respect for seniors, the harsh interrogation (also interpreted as an insistent probing after truth)--all these things become part of the new message.

I would judge that the majority of the establishment is not getting the message. The failure to get the message is registered in countless ways, of which I mention in the most obvious. The failure of the message to get through only encourages the opposition to escalate their medium. In that sense, the blame for escalation is equally the fault of those who fail to provide the required feedback. How does one register that the message is getting through? I would say that Moderator Lila's report is a perfect demonstration that the message is getting through.

Some Concluding Guidelines: These are our students from our churches who have listened to our sermons and taken them more seriously than we supposed or intended. They constitute our future. We want to go back. We can effect this only by police power. The way out is the way ahead, not the way back. To want to return to normal